



**Testimony on Proposed HB No. 7027 An Act Concerning The State Budget For The Biennium Ending June Thirtieth 2019, And Making Appropriations Therefor.**

**Submitted to the Connecticut General Assembly's Appropriations Committee**

**Submitted by Ingrid Alvarez, Connecticut State Director, Hispanic Federation**

**February 16, 2017**

Co-chairs Formica, Osten, Walker, Vice-Chairs Hartley, Miner, Genga, Santiago, Soto, ranking members, and members of the Committee, my name is Ingrid Alvarez and I am the Connecticut State Director of the Hispanic Federation (HF). Hispanic Federation is the premier Latino membership organization in the nation founded to address the many inequities confronting Latinos and the nonprofits that serve them. For more than 20 years, Hispanic Federation has provided grants, administered human services and coordinated advocacy for our broad network of agencies that serve more than 2 million Latinos in areas of health, education, economic empowerment, immigration and civic engagement.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony and present the views of the Hispanic Federation's 13 Latino Nonprofit member agencies across Connecticut on the importance of restoring the Department of Social Services rescissions to the Hispanic Human Resources Development (HHD), the HRD-Hispanic Programs and Healthy Start budgetary line items within the Department of Social Services. Hispanic Federation calls on the General Assembly to oppose the dismantling of the HRD-Hispanic Programs and consolidation of the line under the HIS Community Action Program, to restore the Hispanic Human Resources Development (HHD) to its original investment level of \$945,739 and protect the Healthy Start Program. My testimony today addresses a spectrum of needs faced by Latinos living in Connecticut, including but not limited to language and literacy challenges, health disparities, housing, immigration and obstacles in interacting with governmental programs.

Presently, a modest investment of \$798,748 under the HHD of the Department of Social Services budget supports the work that Latino nonprofits accomplish every day in every community across Connecticut. This is a modest investment, especially when compared to the amount of funding needed to provide crucial services to the community. As it is, our agencies must work hard to organize their own fundraising efforts to address the immediate public needs the Department of Social Services just cannot address directly. This proposed budget also eliminates critically-important programs like Healthy Start, the only statewide maternal health program designed to reduce infant mortality and promote healthy pregnancy and early childhood to over 3,200 low income, high risk women and children in Connecticut.

My perspective is informed by the front-line experiences of Connecticut's Latino nonprofits that work daily addressing needs in our fastest growing communities (Hartford, New Haven, Bridgeport, New London, New Britain, Meriden, Wallingford, Danbury, Norwalk). These growing cities and the Latino Community based organizations that serve them are presently and historically have been under funded and/or not represented under the state's budget. They are struggling under the weight of policy decisions at the local and state levels

adversely affecting their sustainability when the need is so great right now. Protecting the sustainability and viability of these organizations goes to the core of our work.

Latino nonprofits and the diverse programs they provide are the front-line service providers, economic engines, the principal advocates and social glue for the state's 500,000 Latino residents. Our work together; government, nonprofits, foundations; must begin with recognition of the increasing need to enhance, rather than limit, the ability of Latino nonprofit organizations to serve those most in need and strengthen our communities.

Their work improves lives, strengthens communities and the economy, and lightens the burdens of government, taxpayers, and our state. Your constituents recognize the vital and ongoing work of nonprofit organizations in delivering essential services, enhancing their quality of life, and innovation within local communities. Yet every biennium the viability of our organizations that foster civic engagement, reduce the burden on our government serving the public good and enhancing the quality of life of the fastest growing ethnic block in all our state is threatened, zeroed out and made disposable.

Our communities' safety net infrastructure is constantly being dismissed and erroneously regarded as non-core functions unworthy of preserving within our state's budget. These short-sighted cuts fail to generate budget savings for the state. On the contrary, they sustain an inequitable resource allocation system within our state government departments that erode human service and health programs which are vital to the Latino community and the nonprofit organizations that serve them. As CT's Latino population continues to grow, it is imperative for the state's leading stakeholders and leaders to recognize that the future success of the state depends on the success of Latino communities. From public schools to health care, much of what CT will confront in the future revolves around the needs of its Latino residents.

We recognize the General Assembly is trying to determine the right balance of cutting spending. We also realize that under these circumstances, our nonprofits may not just be the next place for people in need to turn; we are likely their only place to turn.

The Governor's proposal to eliminate the Hispanic Human Resource Development lines (HHD & HRD) as well as the dismantling of Health Start—and other vital health programs are not the answer to addressing Connecticut's deficit.

It is imperative for the General Assembly to restore and protect these budget line items. We ask that you avoid endangering the ability of the Latino nonprofits to serve local constituents by making a clear statement in support of the Hispanic Human Resources Development, HRD-Hispanic Programs and Healthy Start Programs and oppose the proposal to have them disappear within our communities.

We look forward to continuing to work with Governor Malloy and the General Assembly to boldly advance policies that protect culturally competent human services and expand opportunities to the state's Latino community

Respectfully submitted,

Ingrid Alvarez

Taking Hispanic causes to heart

## **Appendix**

To the Testimony of Ingrid Alvarez, Connecticut State Director Hispanic Federation

### **Hispanic Federation**

*The mission of Hispanic Federation is to empower and advance the Hispanic community. Hispanic Federation provides grants and services to a broad network of Latino non-profit agencies serving the most vulnerable members of the Hispanic community and advocates nationally with respect to the vital issues of education, health, immigration, economic empowerment, civic engagement and the environment.*

### **Hispanic Federation Connecticut Member Agencies:**

#### **Hispanic Health Council**

Contact: Jose Ortiz, President & CEO [joseo@hispanichealth.com](mailto:joseo@hispanichealth.com) (860) 527-0856 Hispanic Health Council is an organization based in Hartford, CT whose mission is to improve the health and social well being of Latinos and other diverse communities via community based research, evidence based direct services, training and policy advocacy.

#### **Latino Community Services, Inc.**

Contact: Fernando Morales, Executive Director [fmorales@lcs-ct.org](mailto:fmorales@lcs-ct.org) (860) 296-6400 Our mission: To reduce the further spread of HIV/AIDS among the Latino Community and other populations at risk and improve the quality of life and health outcomes of individuals affected by HIV/AIDS.

#### **Spanish Community of Wallingford**

Contact: Maria Fernanda Harlow, Executive Director [mharlow@scow.org](mailto:mharlow@scow.org) (203) 294-2256 Spanish Community Center of Wallingford (SCOW) is a social service organization committed to responding to the needs of the Latino Community by assisting them to succeed in U.S. society, and to enable Latinos to maintain and share their rich varied cultures with the broader community through social service guidance, educational opportunities and cultural sharing.

#### **Spanish American Merchants Association**

Contact: Julio Mendoza, Executive Director [julio\\_mendoza@samact.org](mailto:julio_mendoza@samact.org) (860) 278-5825 SAMA is a non-profit organization incorporated in the State of Connecticut to serve as a vehicle for the economic growth of business. SAMA was created to assist business people, in particular, Latinos, to acquire a better understating of economic principles.

#### **San Juan Center**

Contact: Fernando Betancourt, Executive Director [f\\_bentacourt96@yahoo.com](mailto:f_bentacourt96@yahoo.com) (860) 522-2205 San Juan Center is an individual and family Social Services organization in Hartford, CT providing counseling services to families, housing to low-income elderly and youth development activities.

#### **Center For Latino Progress**

Contact Yanil Teron, Executive Director [yanil\\_teron@ctprf.org](mailto:yanil_teron@ctprf.org) (860) 247-3227 Center's mission is to advance the social and economic conditions of the community at large, with emphasis on Hispanics, through education, training, supportive services, leadership development and advocacy.

**Taking Hispanic causes to heart**

### **Hispanic Center of Greater Danbury, Inc.**

Contact: Andrea Contreras, Executive Director [andrea@danburycentro.com](mailto:andrea@danburycentro.com) (203) 798-2855 Mission is to serve, educate and advocate for Latino and other ethnic communities by facilitating community planning, mobility programs and creating community opportunities that foster social and cultural interaction. eliminating language barriers, creating citizenship and civic participation opportunities, providing health and well-being.

### **South Norwalk Community Center**

Contact: Kelly Robertson, Executive Director [mforero@sonocc.org](mailto:mforero@sonocc.org) (203) 899-2485 South Norwalk Community Center (SONOCC) meets the educational counseling, vocational, employment, emotional, cultural and recreational needs of economically dis-advantaged people and minority groups so that they become self sufficient. The center carries its mission by offering a number of services inclusive of but not limited to, licensed summer camp program, Youth tutoring; health, nutrition and counseling services; senior center programs, job development services, and adult education.

**ARTE, Inc. Contact: David Greco, Executive Director** [dsgreco@sbcglobal.net](mailto:dsgreco@sbcglobal.net) (203) 469- 4536 Arte, Inc., is dedicated to promoting Latino art, culture and talent. Arte establishes partnerships with community agencies and groups to improve the quality of life of residents. Arte assists Latino artists; organize programs, events, shows and exhibits. Arte develops and runs effective youth programming to engage children and mold better citizens.

### **Junta for Progressive Action**

Contact: Sandra Treviño, Executive Director [Sandra.trevino@juntainc.org](mailto:Sandra.trevino@juntainc.org) (203) 787-0191 Mission is to provide services, programs and advocacy that improve the social, political and economic conditions of the Latino community in greater New Haven while nurturing and promoting its cultural traditions as it builds bridges with other communities.

### **Bridgeport Caribe Youth Leaders (BCYL)**

Contact: John Torres, Executive Director [jtorres@bcyl.org](mailto:jtorres@bcyl.org) (203) 913-0073 The mission of BCYL is to provide youth with diverse sports, educational and community awareness programs that foster physical, intellectual and social development, while instilling pride and helping them build character and self-esteem, so that they can reach their full potential and value their role in society.

### **Connecticut Students for a Dream**

Contact: Lucas Codognolla, Executive Director [Lucas@ct4adream.org](mailto:Lucas@ct4adream.org) (203) 391-1626 C4D's work is focused in creating social change and addressing the root causes of injustice and inequity in the lives of our members and communities.

### **Spanish Speaking Center of New Britain**

Contact: Mary Sanders, Executive Director [marymaryssc@yahoo.com](mailto:marymaryssc@yahoo.com) (860) 224-2651 Faith-based community organization serving low and moderate-income families in the New Britain area. Social Services, Adult Education and Career Development, High School Youth programming, Community Food Pantry, Voter Registration and Civic Engagement, Community & Legislative Advocacy.